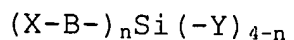


### AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listing of claims in the application:

#### Listing of Claims:

1. (previously presented) A hardener for curing of epoxy resins which produces materials with high abrasion resistance, photostability and chemical resistance, wherein the hardener comprises a sol prepared by controlled hydrolysis and condensation of compounds of the type:



where  $n = 1$  or  $2$ ,  $X = SH$ ,  $-N=C=O$ , or  $NR_1R_2$ ,  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  being chosen from hydrogen, saturated or unsaturated  $C_1$ - $C_{18}$ -alkyl, substituted or non-substituted aryl, formyl, aliphatic or aromatic carbonyl, carbamoyl, sulphonyl, sulfoxyl, phosphonyl, sulphinyl, phosphinyl, while the carbon chains of said compounds may include one or more of the elements oxygen, nitrogen, sulphur, phosphorus, silicon and boron, and/or may include one or more hydrolysable silane units or  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  are chosen from condensation products or addition products of one or more types or chemical compounds such as acids, alcohols, phenols, amines, aldehydes or epoxides, and  $B$  is a spacing group chosen from saturated or unsaturated  $C_1$ - $C_{18}$ -alkylene, substituted or non-substituted arylene, while the carbon chains of the stated compounds may include one or more of the elements oxygen, nitrogen, sulphur, phosphorus, silicon and boron and  $Y$  is chosen from hydrolysable groups such as alkoxy, carboxyl, and halogen.

2. (previously presented) A hardener as claimed in claim

1, wherein the hardener also comprises at least one UV-absorber.

3. (previously presented) A hardener as claimed in claim 1, wherein the hardener also comprises at least one free radical scavenger.

4. (previously presented) A hardener as claimed in claim 1, wherein the hardener also comprises at least one antioxidant.

5. (previously presented) A hardener as claimed in claim 1, wherein the hardener also comprises at least one dye and/or pigment.

6. (previously presented) A hardener as claimed in claim 1, wherein the hardener also comprises at least one filler.

7. (previously presented) A hardener as claimed in claim 1, wherein the hardener also comprises at least one additive.

8. (withdrawn) Hardener as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that  $X = NR_1R_2$ ,  $R_1$  is hydrogen and  $R_2$  is  $H-(HN-CH_2-CH_2-)_m$  where  $m = 0-6$ ,  $B$  is propylene,  $n = 1$ , and  $Y$  is an ethoxy or methoxy.

9. (withdrawn) Hardener as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that  $X = NR_1R_2$ ,  $R_1$  is hydrogen and  $R_2$  is phenyl,  $B$  is propylene,  $n = 1$ , and  $Y$  is ethoxy or methoxy.

10. (withdrawn) Hardener as claimed in claim 1,

characterized in that  $X = NR_1R_2$ ,  $R_1$  is hydrogen and  $R_2$  is carbamoyl, B is propylene,  $n = 1$ , and Y is ethoxy or methoxy.

11. (withdrawn) Hardener as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that  $X = SH$ , B is propylene,  $n = 1$ , and Y is ethoxy or methoxy.

12. (withdrawn) Hardener as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that  $X = -N=C=O$ , B is propylene,  $n = 1$ , and Y is ethoxy or methoxy.

13. (withdrawn) Hardener as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the sol is prepared entirely or partly by controlled hydrolysis and condensation of bis ( $\gamma$ -trialkoxysilylpropyl)amine.

14. (withdrawn) Hardener as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the sol is prepared entirely or partly by controlled hydrolysis and condensation of tri[3-(trialkoxysilylpropyl)]isocyanurate.

15. (currently amended) A hardener as claimed in claim 1, wherein [[more or less]] free amino groups at the surface of the particle-forming condensation product in the sol has been entirely or partly converted with reactive compounds such as epoxides, acid derivatives, blocked and non-blocked isocyanates and compounds of the type  $R-X$  where X is a suitable atom or atom group that may be replaced and R is an organic residue or a fraction of such residue.

16. (previously presented) A hardener as claimed in claim

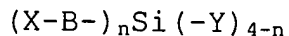
15, wherein X is chosen among halogen, substituted or non-substituted alkoxyl, phenoxyl, amine, carboxylate, sulphonate, sulphinate, phosphonate and phosphinate.

17. (previously presented) A hardener as claimed in claim 15, wherein R is chosen among non-substituted saturated and unsaturated C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>24</sub> alkyl, substituted saturated or unsaturated C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>24</sub> alkyl, substituted or non-substituted aryl, aliphatic or aromatic carbonyl, wherein the carbon chains of said compounds may optionally include one or more of the elements nitrogen, sulphur, silicon and boron and groups chosen among condensation products of one or more type of chemical compounds such as acids, alcohols, phenols, amines, aldehydes and epoxides.

18. (previously presented) A cured epoxy material, manufactured from an epoxy resin and a hardener as defined by claim 1.

19. (currently amended) A method for curing epoxy resins, comprising the steps of

i) producing a stable sol by controlled hydrolysis and condensation of a silane compound of the formula:



where  $n = 1$  or  $2$ ,  $X = SH$ ,  $-N=C=O$ , or  $NR_1R_2$ ,  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  being chosen from hydrogen, saturated or unsaturated C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>18</sub>-alkyl, substituted or non-substituted aryl, formyl, aliphatic or aromatic carbonyl, carbamoyl, sulphonyl, sulfoxyl, phosphonyl, sulphinyl and phosphinyl, while the carbon chains of said compounds may optionally include one or more of the elements oxygen, nitrogen, sulphur, phosphorus, silicon and

boron, and/or may include one or more hydrolysable silane units or  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  are chosen from condensation products or addition products of one or more types of chemical compounds such as acids, alcohols, phenols, amines, aldehydes or epoxides, and B is a spacing group chosen from saturated or unsaturated  $C_1$ - $C_{18}$ -alkylene, substituted or non-substituted arylene, while the carbon chains of the stated compounds may include one or more of the elements oxygen, nitrogen, sulphur, phosphorus, silicon and boron; and Y is chosen from hydrolysable groups such as alkoxy, carboxyl, and halogen;

said silane compound optionally being a modified one, and that

ii) the sol, subsequent to possible storage, is mixed with an epoxy resin so that the latter is cured.

20. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein unwanted reaction products from step i), such as alcohols and water, are removed from the sol prior to step ii).

Claim 21 (canceled).